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THE

VALEDICTORY ADDRESS,

DELIVERED BEFORE THE

Athenæum of Toronto,

AT THE

CLOSE OF THEIR ANNUAL SESSION, ON THURSDAY, APRIL 30, 1846.

BY

HENRY SCADDING, M.A.,

*Of the College of St. John the Evangelist, Cambridge, Domestic Chaplain
to the Bishop of Toronto, &c. &c. &c.,*

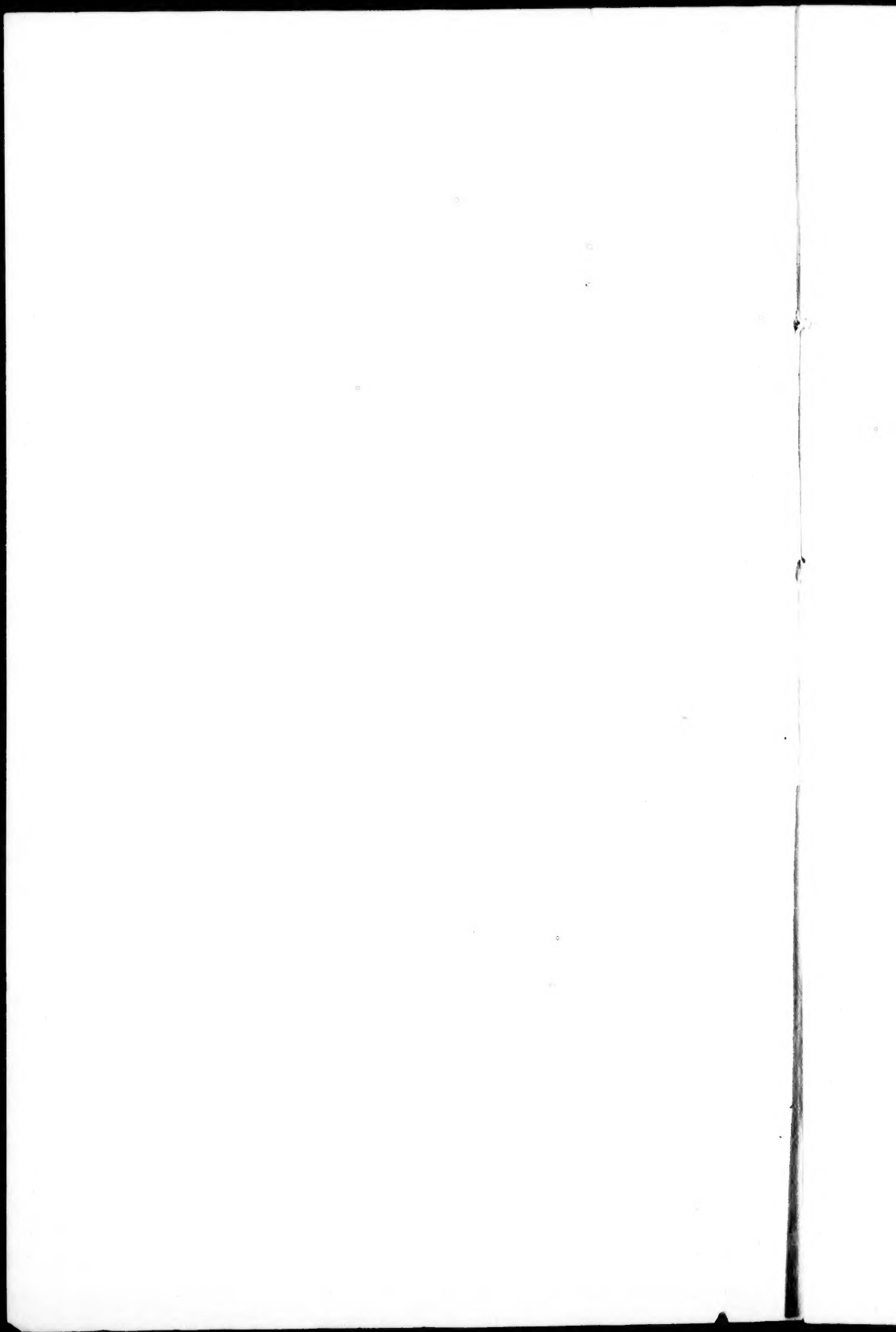
PRESIDENT.

PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

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IN looking back upon the session of the *ATHENÆUM*, which this night comes to a close, I think we have no cause to be over discouraged. We have succeeded to the extent that a calm reasoner on the subject would have anticipated. It is not found to be the experience anywhere,—even in towns of larger size than *TORONTO* in the parent-country,—that these voluntary associations for literary purposes are exceedingly vigorous in their growth. Neither are they, I imagine, always constant and equal in their character from the beginning to the end of each session. They must be subject,—and we should expect it,—to variations from many causes—from the unavoidable removal of active and useful members; from the paramount demands of professional duty; and from the springing up of temporary attractions elsewhere. We have suffered a little from each of these causes during the past winter. Nevertheless we have laboured at our vocation, as we best could; our meetings have been regularly kept up, and we have at no time lost sight of the objects of the Association. *PERSEVERANCE* has still to be our motto. We occupy ground, which one day *must* be occupied. If we relinquish it, it will only be to see it entered upon by others, who will simply undertake duties which we ourselves, at this moment, have the power honourably to discharge.

“Keep then the path,
For emulation hath a thousand sons,
That one by one pursue. If you give way,
Or hedge aside from the direct forth-right,
Like to an enter’d tide they all rush by,
And leave you hindmost;—
Or like a gallant horse, fallen in first rank,
Lie there for pavement to the abject rear,
O’er-run and trampled. Then what they do in present,
Though less than yours in past, must o’ertop yours.”

But we should ever bear in mind that we must not trust too much to the mere spontaneous growth of such associations. We must be willing, some of us, to put the shoulder to the wheel, and keep them up perforce. Then we may inspire ourselves with a confidence that we shall ultimately succeed. No large town of the parent-country is without its public library and its literary institutions. They seem to be natural wants. There will be always found a few in every community to feel a sincere interest in such objects,—to feel an attachment to them, and a readiness to exert

themselves for their promotion. These few will gradually, year by year, have others added to them. Mere paucity of numbers should at no time discourage us. We should be probably subject to disappointment, were we to expect, even when TORONTO has filled up its limits, and the population has doubled itself, to find the number of persons uniting together in literary associations like ours very numerous, and bearing a large proportion to the whole population. Indeed it would be scarcely advisable to have our numbers too unlimited. Let us go on, and the day will come when it will be a desired distinction to be one of our body. We have begun fairly, or rather we have happily entered upon the labours of the "magnanimous few," who from time to time preceded us, and have done something towards rendering their praiseworthy labours effective.

Our Library, humble as it at this moment is, will yet be a monument to the honour of the ATHENÆUM.

"Go up and watch the new-born rill
Just trickling from its mossy bed,
Streaking the heath-clad hill
With a bright emerald thread.
Canst thou her bold career foretell,
What rocks she shall o'erleap or rend,
How far in Ocean's swell
Her freshening billows send?"

Time was, D'Israeli tells us, when the Royal Library of France consisted only of twenty volumes; and the Public Library of Oxford of a few tracts kept in a chest. Our collections already therefore exceed the Royal Library of France in 1364, and the University Library of Oxford in 1300.

The number of our books pretty steadily rises. During the past session we have received donations to the extent of thirty-two volumes. Further augmentations will take place at the opening of the navigation, by the arrival of more of the publications of the Literary Societies of the parent-country, who are so willing to encourage us by their countenance. We also hope to receive additions from Montreal, results of the petition of the Corporation in our behalf, to the Parliament now in session. There are other quarters too from whence we look for accessions.

The Library will be a strong centre, which will be able at all times to hold the Society together. I like to picture to myself the day, when our successors in the ATHENÆUM,—and it may be some of ourselves,—will assemble together in a building of their own; in some grave, dignified apartment, lined round—lined high with books; where, ranged aloft along presses of our own dark Canadian walnut,—above tomes of Divinity, Philosophy and Song,—will calmly gaze down the still, death-like busts of their authors,—each wearing that solemn air of unperturbedness and content which

might seem to shadow forth the fixedness of place in the memories of men, which its illustrious prototype had won. Here, it requires no great power of prophecy to predict, will be the resort of studious souls; an irresistible attraction to the truth-loving, and truth-seeking,—to all who are conscious within themselves of “the vision and the faculty divine;”—who feel

“The spur that the clear spirit doth raise,
To scorn delights, and live laborious days.”

Surely in every community there will be always some such; and to such, few though they may be, an Institution like our own will be congenial. To such, I can well imagine our Library hereafter becoming as it were a home—a most cherished haunt—a place full of friends, peopled with the departed; standing, it may be, in the room even of sons and daughters. “For books,” says Milton, “are not absolutely dead things, but do contain a progeny of life in them to be as active as that soul whose progeny they are. I know,” he continues, “they are as lively, and as vigorously productive as those fabulous dragon’s teeth; and being sown up and down, may chance to spring up armed men. And yet, on the other hand, unless wariness be used, as good almost kill a man as kill a good book. Many a man lives a burden to the earth; but a good book is the precious lifeblood of a master-spirit, embalmed and treasured up on purpose to a life beyond life.”

Hear good Bishop Hall too, how he expresses the sense of companionship which he finds in his books, as he glances around his library. “What a happiness is it,” says he, “that without all offence of necromancy, I may here call up any of the antient worthies of learning, whether human or divine, and confer with them of all my doubts! that I can at pleasure summon whole synods of reverend fathers and acute doctors, from all the coasts of the earth, to give their well-studied judgments in all the points of question which I propose! Neither can I cast my eye casually upon any of these silent masters, but I must learn somewhat: it is a wantonness to complain of choice.”

Hear too the great Lord Bacon expressing similar thoughts: “Libraries are as the shrines where all the relics of the antient saints, full of true virtue, and that without delusion or imposture, are preserved and reposed.”

“Here,” says another in a like strain, as he seats himself down in the midst of his books, “here, in the very lap of eternity, amongst so many divine souls, I take my seat with so lofty a spirit and sweet content, that I pity all our great ones and rich men that know not this happiness.”

Let us hear too what the Philosopher of Melancholy says: “What a world of books,” he says, “offers itself in all subjects, arts and sciences, to the sweet content and capacity of the reader!

* * * * * We have thousands of authors of all sorts, many great libraries full well furnished; like so many dishes of meat served out for several palates; and he is a very block that is affected with none of them."*

Let us listen also to a poet :

"That place that does
Contain my books, the best companions, is
To me a glorious court, where hourly I
Converse with the old sages and philosophers ;
And sometimes for variety I confer
With kings and emperors, and weigh their counsels."†

These testimonies are utterances of a voice of nature ; they imply the craving which our Library will in time be able to satisfy.

Again, by means of our lectures and literary *conversazioni*, we shall every year become more and more capable of affording that stimulus to the cultivation of literature which is required, where literature is pursued as a recreation. The tax which our Institution lays upon the time and studies of its members, is one which is quite compatible with the following out of the ordinary business of life. And this, by the testimony of experienced men, is the pleasantest and safest use to make of literature, viz.—a recreation, in contradistinction to a profession. Letters present such a wide, undefined field, that it is a great risk for the mind to plunge out into the midst thereof, without having a very distinct object in view ; it is apt to be dissipated and weakened by the vagueness of the matter before it : it is apt to fly from point to point, on the occurrence of any difficulty, from the absence of a *necessity* of being tied down to one line of thought. To give way to caprices of this description, as a man most probably will who has no steady-going, common-place profession to combine with the pursuits of literature,—to contract habits of overcoming nothing,—has a most detrimental effect upon the whole man, and is likely to lay the foundation of tempers and dispositions which will prove ruinous to him.

The pursuit of letters, as a sole profession, has become proverbial for its deleterious and impoverishing effects.

"Seven fair cities strive for Homer dead,
Thro' which the living Homer begged his bread."

Homer, however, in justice to the Muse it must be added, is said to have been also a schoolmaster. How much this latter circumstance may have contributed to his miseries, there is many a poor, harassed preceptor in this Province who would be able to offer a guess. But at any rate, from his days, until very recently, to live by the wits solely, has ever been accounted but a lean trade.

* Burton. *Anatomy of Melancholy*. † Fletcher. *Elder Brother*. Act. 1, sc. 2.

In a vast community like that of England, however, at the present moment, where all effluences of the brain that are sterling and good, are so readily appreciated and understood,—the facility of living solely by the setting down of the mental workings upon paper, has increased; and many a clever man, without any patrimony but his pen, derives a competent subsistence from the Reviews, Periodicals, and great Newspapers of the day. Still, as a general rule, and one applicable amongst ourselves, the pursuit of literature is safest as a *recreation*; as a study kept up collaterally with a plain, steady-going profession. Man was made to struggle with realities;—the idealities seem to have been intended but to amuse and delight him. Hear the lesson which Coleridge, who spoke from experience, would impress upon us: "Never," says he, "pursue literature as a trade. With the exception of one extraordinary man, I have never known an individual, least of all an individual of genius, healthy or happy without a profession, i. e. some *regular* employment which does not depend on the will of the moment, and which can be carried on so far *mechanically*, that an average quantum only of health, spirits and intellectual exertion are requisite to its faithful discharge. Three hours of leisure, unannoyed by any alien anxiety, and looked forward to with delight as a change and recreation, will suffice to realize in literature a larger production of what is truly *genial*, than weeks of compulsion." Listen also to a sentence from Hazlitt, which will instruct us on the same point. "Let any one," he says, "devote himself to any art or science ever so strenuously, and he will still have leisure to make considerable progress in half a dozen other acquirements. Leonardo da Vinci was a mathematician, a musician, a poet, and an anatomist, besides being one of the greatest painters of the age. The prince of painters was a courtier, a lover, and fond of dress and company. Michael Angelo was a prodigy of versatility of talent; a writer of sonnets (which Wordsworth has thought worth translating), and the friend of Dante. Salvator was a botanist and a satirist. Titian was an elegant letter-writer and a finished gentleman. Sir Joshua Reynolds' Discourses are more polished and elegant than any of his pictures. Let any man do all he can in any one branch of study, he must either exhaust himself and doze over it, or vary his pursuit, or else lie idle. * * * Men should have one principal pursuit, which may be both agreeably and advantageously diversified with other lighter ones, as the subordinate parts of a picture may be managed so as to give effect to the centre group."

As a modern instance of the truth of these ideas, let us call to mind what good service has been done by a Talfourd in late years to the cause of literature, without abating one tittle of his diligence in the discharge of public duties. As he himself says, in

his happily-chosen motto from Pope, prefixed to his Tragedies and Sonnets,

"I left no calling for this idle trade,
No duty broke."

So Roscoe,—so Rogers, amidst an active engagement in the common businesses of life, found means to gain for themselves conspicuous niches in the Walhalla of England. Hear too a word from Basil Montagu, who employed his leisure snatched from laborious legal cares, in selecting a book of choice sentences from some of the greatest writers of England—a little work that will give pleasure and do service to future generations.* On the result of this his (perhaps it will be thought) very humble style of literary recreation, he indulges in his preface in this pleasant anticipation, which, I doubt not, has again and again been realised. "Often," he says, "in my solitary walks through this noble city [London, he refers to], more quiet to me than the retirement of academic bowers, I shall indulge the hope that this volume may, perchance, be opened by some young man who, at his entrance into life, is meditating upon that 'suavissima vita indies sentire se fieri meliorem.' May this little spark of holy fire," he continues, referring to his book, "direct him to the place where the star appears, and point to the very house where the babe lies. In the works of those ancient writers," he continues, "which as so many lights shine before us, he will find what is better than rubies and gold, yea, than fine gold. He will learn not to be misled by the transient pleasures of life; but to seek for permanent happiness, where it can alone be found, in knowledge, in piety, and in charity." Yes! and Basil Montagu will not have lived in vain, if only the fruits of a few of his *leisure hours* shall happen to survive him.

Can we not see too that those gallant men who have so lately ventured their lives for their country in the East, are something more than mere soldiers? Those spirit-stirring despatches of theirs, infusing into us all a fresh sense of the honour of bearing the British name, speak loudly also of their being literary men. They carried away with them from the happy quadrangles of Eton, or Winchester, or some other of the sterling old schools of England, a classic tincture ingrained into them, which not the suns of India's clime, nor the wear of many a campaign, will ever be able to extract. Perchance, like Alexander, they to this day sleep with their Homer not far off from them; or like Germanicus, dally with the Muses even in the camp.

The essays and other exercises which our Institution demands of its members, tend to direct our attention to the healthy use of literature as a recreation. And in this respect we hope to present

* There is a neat reprint of this work in Wiley and Putnam's *Library of Choice Reading*, No. xxvi.

an improvement, when we assemble together again. By the next session, we hope to have arrangements made for a series of lectures, of a more extended character than those which we have yet been able to provide. We intend to call upon our members to be preparing something for the Institution during the summer. I hope indeed we shall find some friends to volunteer their services in this respect. Most men have some favourite topics of thought upon which it delights them to dwell—towards which their minds turn in leisure moments. From the interest which they feel in these topics, they would be sure to inspire an interest in their behalf in us and in others, were they to commit their thoughts to paper, and favour us with the hearing of them. Every man having something, it is probable, peculiar to himself, he would be sure, if he used with any fidelity the gifts bestowed upon him, to add some ideas to the general stock; or if he did not succeed so far as that, he would certainly present old ones, so burnished and freshened, as to afford much pleasure to every hearer and reader. I hope that some that now hear me will fix upon a subject forthwith for one or more essays during the ensuing session, and communicate their choice to the secretary. This will have the double effect of securing to us an uninterrupted series of attractions during the next winter, and of exciting in those who come to the determination of writing for us, a spirit of research, reflection, observation, and reading. When we have one great leading topic of thought before us, for some time together, it is astonishing to observe how many things we find everywhere to bear upon it. The conversation of friends, unconsciously to them, furnishes us with hints; books present every here and there ideas exactly adapted to our purpose, corroborating, bringing out, and clearing our own conceptions: even casual paragraphs in the newspapers sometimes unexpectedly furnish little facts, which fall of themselves into proper places, and fill up minute chinks in the mental edifices which we are rearing. It is a great pleasure thus to have a subject for rumination,—a matter to fall back upon in the intervals of business. It is interesting to find how many thoughts spontaneously spring up and cluster around it. It is however too often the case that nothing visible, tangible and durable comes of all this. Long trains of ideas are dissipated; bright thoughts are lost; beautiful imagery and striking presentations of things irrecoverably vanish. Like the brave men who lived before Agamemnon, they perish for the lack of a record.* Now by the having an essay to write, things are brought to a crisis. Floating ideas have somewhat to fasten themselves upon. Every thought can be made to tell; but then those that are vague and undefined must be collected together, concentrated and fixed. And the essay will be an *object* for which the mind

* See Horace, Carm. iv., 9. 25.

will consent to undergo all this trouble. The mind will foresee that there will be something to shew, when all is done : however irksome and laborious the process of seizing, moulding, arranging, reducing and polishing ideas may be, it will be conscious that the remembrance of the fatigues will pass away, while the pleasure and honour of the finished work will remain—a thing of history that cannot be undone. What satisfaction is there more real than that which we experience when we contemplate results laboriously arrived at, difficulties surmounted, ends attained ? This satisfaction the production of an essay yields ; and, succeeding once, the mind is encouraged to venture forth again and again to gather flowers and fruits from other fields. But so great is the indolence of most men, so powerful is their *vis inertiae* ; so difficult is it to get them to move—that without some such external stimulus as the necessary composition of an essay affords, they would seldom of their own accord reduce their thoughts to a distinct form, and set them down on paper. Here then is an advantage flowing from the existence of our Institution. We ask for essays. We thus furnish occasions for the development of useful thoughts which might otherwise have remained dormant,—which might otherwise as well therefore not have existed.

“Scire tuum nihil est, nisi te scire hoc sciat alter.”

Who knows but that in some instances, a little flame lighted up by success in this room may grow to be a light which shall at an after time help to increase the lustre of our country's name. A man knows not his powers till he has tried them ; and many men do not try theirs, because they have no sphere, no fair opportunity for doing so. This Institution now renders all its members without excuse in this respect. It was, as it were, a mere accident that first discovered to Milton the capability which he possessed of distinguishing himself amongst men. He at the moment little foresaw the great fame that awaited him. But it was a good sign when the “clear spirit” within him began to prompt him to action : had he never made a beginning, with all his natural gifts, he might have gone down to the grave like common mortals, “unhonoured and unsung.” He thus speaks of this turning point of his history : it took place when he was in Italy : “Perceiving,” he says, “that some trifles which I had in memory, composed at under twenty or thereabout (for the manner is that every one must give some proof of his wit and reading there), met with acceptance above what was looked for ; and other things which I had shifted, in scarcity of books and conveniences, to patch up among them, were received with written encomiums, which the Italian is not forward to bestow on men of this side of the Alps, I began thus far to assent both to them and divers of my friends here at home, and not less to an inward prompting, which now grew daily upon me, that by labour

and intent study (which I take to be my portion in this life), joined to the strong propensity of nature, I might perhaps leave something so written, to after times, as they should not willingly let it die."

By fulfilling the duties which membership in our Society renders incumbent upon us, I see no reason why some of our body should not one day find, that they were capable of writing something for future times—something which posterity will not willingly let die. Already, if I mistake not, Canada is about to lay a wreath of her own native flowers at the feet of one of her sons, and to honour with a just respect the name of JOHN BREAKENRIDGE, a name not enrolled in our lists, yet likely hereafter, I think, to be suggestive of so many feelings congenial with our title and objects, as to justify me, I trust, in making this passing reference to it.*

Here, I will add, that the remarks which I have made on the fostering effect which our ATHENÆUM is adapted to have upon the study of literature, in the way of exciting increased research and reading, are applicable even to those ladye-friends, whom, I am sure, we shall always feel rejoiced to see seated in our halls. Our next session, we trust, will be more attractive to them than those which have preceded it. A becoming taste for the *belles lettres* may be increasingly elicited in them, and cherished by the influence of our Society. How well such tastes and such pursuits sit upon the sex, we can judge by contemplating for one moment the interesting picture which Roger Ascham draws of Lady Jane Grey, and her recreations at Broadgate in Leicestershire. He had gone down to bid her adieu, on his departure for Germany. He found "her parents, the duke and duchess, with all the household gentlemen and gentlewomen, hunting in the park." But, he then goes on to say — "I found *her* in her chamber, reading *Phædo Platonis* in Greek, and that, with as much delight as some gentlemen would read a merry tale in Boccace. After salutation and duty done, with some other talk, I asked her, why she would lose such pastime in the park? Smiling, she answered me, 'I wiss all their sport in the park is but a shadow to that pleasure that I find in Plato. Alas! good folk, they never felt what true pleasure meant!' 'And how came *you*, Madam,' said I, 'to this deep knowledge of pleasure? And what did chiefly allure you unto it, seeing not many women, but very few men, have attained thereunto?' 'I will tell you,' quoth she, 'and tell you a truth which, perchance, ye will marvel at. One of the greatest benefits that ever God gave me, is, that he sent me so sharp and severe parents, and so gentle a schoolmaster. For when I am in presence of either father or mother, whether I speak, keep silence, sit, stand, or go, eat, drink, be merry or sad, be sewing, playing, dancing, or doing anything else, I must do it, as it were, in such weight, measure and

* See a specimen of *The Crusades and Other Poems*, by John Breakenridge, Esq., in No. 42, vol. ix. of *The Church*.

number, even so perfectly as God made the world, or else I am so sharply taunted, so cruelly threatened, yea, presently sometimes with pinches, nips and bobs, and other ways, which I will not name for the honour I bear them, so without measure disordered, that I think myself in hell, till the time come that I must go to Mr. Elmer; who teacheth me so gently, so pleasantly, with such fair allurements to learning, that I think all the time nothing whiles I am with him.* And when I am called from him, I fall on weeping, because whatever I do else but learning, is full of grief, trouble, fear and whole misliking unto me. And thus my book hath been so much my pleasure, and bringeth daily to me more pleasure and more, that, in respect of it, all other pleasures, in very deed, be but trifles and troubles unto me.'"

I wish our Society to stand, as it were, in the place of the kind Mr. Elmer, and allure all, by some happy attractiveness, to literary tastes and recreations.

We now, as I have said, ask for essays. These will be a source to us of extensive pleasure and information. We also ask for the subjects to be given in beforehand: that will fix the writer to his task, and keep him from changing, as he would otherwise be tempted to do, on the occurrence of little difficulties. Having also the subjects handed in during the summer, we shall be able to arrange them in some convenient order for delivery. Indeed it would be well if we could, by a combined arrangement, produce a series,—of historical subjects, (suppose)—one taking one era, and another another; one giving the literary, another the scientific, another the political history of the era. Or we might have a scientific series, one selecting one department, and another another, by arrangement. And should we (I may here take occasion to add), in the course of these or any other of the exercises of the Society, hear some statements that do not exactly coincide with our own judgments and views on particular points, let us not utterly stumble thereat, but be excited thereby rather to additional thought and research. As wise Dr. Fuller has said, "When any one contradicts me, he raises my attention, not my anger; I advance towards him that controverts, that instructs me. The cause of truth ought to be the common cause both of one and the other. * * *

I embrace and caress truth in what hand soever I find it, and cheerfully surrender myself and my conquered arms, as far off as I can discover it; and, provided it be not too imperiously, take a pleasure in being reproved; and accommodate myself to my accusers, very often more by reason of civility than amendment, loving to gratify and nourish the liberty of admonition, by my facility of submitting to it."

As regards the plan proposed for the next session, I, for my part,

* This was Dr. Aylmer, afterwards the distinguished Bishop of London, in Queen Elizabeth's reign.

shall be willing and happy to join any gentlemen of the ATHENÆUM in the carrying of it into effect. I think it will succeed; and may without much trouble, year after year, be maintained.

During the session that now comes to a close there have been read in this room by members of the Literary and Historical branch of the ATHENÆUM, fifteen essays, of the character of none of which has the Society any reason to be ashamed. From all of them, I am sure, we derived great pleasure, and carried away many additions to our stock of information. It were to be wished that we always had a larger number of friends, as well as actual members, in attendance, on each occasion, to form a judgment for themselves, as well as to cheer on and enspire the essayist. But upon the subject of paucity of numbers I have already enlarged. We must, as I have said, expect it, and then we shall not be disappointed when thin attendances do take place. Such occurrences must not prevent us from going on. "Philosophy," Cicero says, "is content with few judges." Milton himself asked for his heavenly muse only "Fit audience, tho' few."

Let the Society bide its day. Its essays and lectures will become more attractive. Its Library will grow, and be every year more really useful for reference. As our funds increase, our tables will be spread with the choice periodicals of the day; which of themselves will allure, nay command attendance.

We now break up for the present season. Though our Library will be regularly open for the use of members throughout the summer, our stated meetings for literary and historical discussion, and for the reading and hearing of essays, come to an end this night. By the time we assemble together again we shall have digested and settled the lectures which we hope to open with, at the commencement of the next session. The interval, I doubt not, will be refreshing to all; and will tend to bring us together again with vigour, and a fresh zest for our literary exercises. These, if attempted to be continued through the whole year, would be in constant danger of languishing and falling through. Besides, the fair sunsets, and balmy airs of our long summer-evenings, bid us then rather be abroad, than immured within the gloom of libraries and the atmosphere of lamps. Also, it is, we must remember, with the pursuits of our Society, as it is with all study: "As little study,"—I again borrow the words of one of my old friends—"getteth little learning or none at all, so the most study getteth not the most learning of all. For a man's wit, fore-occupied in earnest study, must be as well recreated with some honest pastime, as the body, fore-laboured, must be refreshed with sleep and quietness, or else it cannot endure very long, as the noble poet saith—

'What thing wants quiet and merry rest,
Endures but a small while.'

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